DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 129 208 HE 008 306

AUTHOR Aberman, Hugh M.
TITLE College Motivation and Clarity of Occupational Choice.
PUB DATE 73
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; *Career Choice; *College Freshmen; *College Majors; *Higher Education; *Occupational Choice; Specialization; *Student Characteristics; *Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS Shippensburg State College

ABSTRACT

Specific survey test items were developed to gain greater insight into the school and career motivation of incoming freshmen at Shippensburg State College. The survey was administered to 680 members of the class (73 percent). The percentages of student school major representation in the sample generally reflect those of the total class. The results indicate that almost half of the freshmen have a particular job in mind that motivates their college studies and are looking forward to full-time employment immediately after graduation. Over 80 percent want a freshmen or early sophomore year experience with specific courses in their major field of interest. Over one-third of the class believes the most realistic time to choose their major field of study is the first semester of their sophomore year. Over 75 percent want special advisement to help choose their major, in addition to the usual student advisement program for declared majors. Additional analyses of possible relationships between varied background characteristics and the principle questions of this study were provided by the computer program on: income level, father's occupation, drug use, sex, grade-point average, and geographical area. (LBH)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED129208

COLLEGE MOTIVATION AND CLARITY OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

Hugh M. Aberman, Ed.D.
Department of Psychology

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HE003306

Shippensburg State College
Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

1973

COLLEGE MOTIVATION AND CLARITY OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

Background

This study was an attempt to gain greater insight into the school and career motivation of incoming freshmen at Shippensburg State College. From the specific suggestions of Vice President Smay and the helpful cooperation of Dr. Jones, Dr. Perkins, and Dr. Kerr, specific survey test items were developed for this inquiry. These questions were incorporated into the Socio-Economic Survey instrument which the writer had been using in previous student research. On Thursday, October 26, this survey was administered to 680 members of the freshman class in Memorial Auditorium. Card punching of data and their tabulation was carried out by the staff of the Computer Center directed by Dr. William Gould.

Characteristics of Sample

Approximately 73 percent, or 682 members of the freshman class comprised the sample population. The percentages of student school major representation in the sample generally reflect those of the total class.

Table - 1

Enrollment Distribution by Curriculum

	Obtained Sample Percentage	Freshman Totals *
Business Education	4%	5%
Elementary Education	24%	21%
Secondary Education	13%	14%
Library Science	2%	2%
Arts and Sciences	34%	36%
Business Administration	18%	21%

* Data obtained from Office of the Dean of Admissions

The variation of one to three percentage points is inconsequential with a sample of this size. From the perspective of major field composition, the obtained freshman sample seems totally adequate.

There is one limitation of the sample that should be noted. While the Admissions Office reports the male-female ratio for the total class was 46% - 53%, the ratio for this sample was 39% - 60%, a seven percent difference. Four of the six major fields had the expected male-female differences projected from total population estimates. In the Schools of Arts and Sciences and Business Administration, however, more males were absent from the testing than expected. Specifically, there were seven percent less males in Arts and Sciences and five percent less in Business Administration.

Previous student research has indicated males to be more forthright, liberal, and assertive. It is not surprising that males would be less likely to attend required group testing. The absence of some of its more socially bold members would cast the sample population in a slightly more conservative light than expected. Even with the noted qualification, the overall effect is slight for the obtained sample is certainly representative of the total population for the purposes of this investigation.

Results

Part I - Test Items and Response Totals

Question #1

Listed below are reasons given by students for wanting a college education. Select the one you feel most influenced your own decision to attend college.

47% - I have a particular future job in mind, and it requires college training.

24% - I feel that generally I can get a better job in the future with a college degree.

7% - I don't quite know what my future occupation might be so I'm using my four years at college to make up my mind.

5% - I'm somewhat curious and confused about life in general and look to my college experience to help me understand things better.

3% - If you want to become any type of professionally trained person in this world, you need a college degree.

2% - I am interested in meeting interesting people (and a possible spouse) while improving my social and intellectual skills.

2% - Other (Write In)

1% - I have nothing else better to do right now, and the thought of working and living at home was not appealing.

Observations

The two most highly chosen responses proved to be extremely sensitive in showing significant differences in college motivation between student curriculum majors. Elementary Education and Library Science majors were 20 percent more likely than the class average to have a "particular job in mind". Arts and Sciences and Business Administration majors often selected responses indicating less specific motivation. These latter two groups had a particular job less in mind and felt generally getting a degree got them a better job.

The influence of the large number of Elementary Education majors is largely responsible for the job based college motivation the class showed as a whole. Future trends in enrollment already seen in this class might drastically change this picture. The continued percentage increase of Liberal Arts and Business Administration enrollments should bring to campus greater numbers of students with uncertain job aspirations.

Question #2

What do you plan to do after you complete your four years of college?

56% - Find full-time employment as soon as possible after I graduate.

12% - Take at least a year off to travel and gain some helpful experience.

8% - Find a part-time job and begin graduate study on a part-time basis.

8% - Other (Write In)

7% - Go on for full-time graduate study.

3% - Get married, raise a family, and leave the job market for awhile.

1% - Join or serve in the military service.

Observations

The outstanding feature of the results to this question is the commitment of over half of the freshmen sampled to full time employment immediately upon graduation. Also worth noting is the total of 15 percent of these students who are already looking forward to graduate school on a part-time or full-time basis. The fact that 12 percent of the sample planned upon taking a year off for travel or useful experience should not be overlooked.

An analysis by student curriculum showed only two groups of majors whose responses differed widely on this question. Elementary Education majors seemed far more committed to post-graduate full-time employment with almost 3/4 of them selecting that response. In contrast, Arts and Sciences were more inclined towards full-time or part-time graduate study and travel. The noted shift towards greater Arts and Science enrollment might just provide some easing in the current job placement pressure when these freshmen graduate.

Question #3

In what semester in college would you want to take specific courses in your major field or ultimate occupation speciality?

34% - Freshman Year - 1st semester

25% - Freshman Year - 2nd semester

23% - Sophomore Year - 1st semester

9% - Sophomore Year - 2nd semester

4% - Junior Year - 1st semester

0% - Junior Year - 2nd semester

0 - Senior Year - 1st semester

0 - Senior Year - 2nd semester

0 - Other

Observations

The strong sentiment for freshmen and early sophomore year experience with major related courses is undeniable. Elementary Education majors provide the greatest pressure for freshman year course selection, which seems consistent with their strong desire for post graduate full time employment. Arts and Science majors were more prone to wait for the first semester of their sophomore year to select these courses. There were no other differences between curriculum majors in the response to this question.

Question #4

How certain are you right now about the type of job you would like to start at the time you graduate?

Absolutely certain 23%

Fairly certain 47%

Not quite sure 18%

Totally undecided 10%

Observations

Fully 70 percent of the freshmen sample were at least fairly certain of their future type of job. By far the greater part of these respondents were Elementary Education and Library Science majors.

The 28 percent who were "not quite sure" or "totally undecided" about their job future were largely composed of Liberal Arts and Business Administration majors.

Table - 2

Job Certainty By Curriculum Major

	Class Norm	Elem. Ed.	Lib. Sci.	Arts and Sci.	Bus. Admin.
Absolutely certain	23	36	44	16	17
Fairly certain	47	49	39	43	46
Not quite sure	18	13	14	24	21
Totally undecided	10	1	0	15	14

This question's general pattern of results by curriculum major is congruent with the analysis of previous questions dealing with job clarity and college motivation.

Question #5

When during your college career would be a reasonable time for you to decide what type of future occupation you'd prefer?

Before you start your freshman year 18%

Freshman year - 1st semester 4%

Freshman year - 2nd semester 9%

Sophomore year - 1st semester 20%

Sophomore year - 2nd semester 20%

Junior year - 1st semester 17%

Junior year - 2nd semester 5%

Senior year - 1st semester 1%

Senior year - 2nd semester 0%

After graduation 0%

Observations

These results indicate that these freshmen generally are inclined to decide their future career selection fairly early during their college years. Approximately 3/4 of those tested felt their future occupation would be decided upon by the end of their sophomore year. Curriculum majors differed quite noticeably in their response to this question. Elementary Education majors were more inclined towards responses indicating career selection before or during the freshman year. Freshmen in Business Administration and Arts and Sciences more often wanted to postpone career choice until the second semester of the sophomore year and first semester of the junior year. These findings are not unexpected. An education major by classification seems more likely to have already completed a self-screening process of career choice. The freshman who may want time and varied experiences to help him decide his future would seem prone to matriculate in the school of Arts and Sciences.

Question #6

What would be the most realistic time to expect students to choose their major field of study in college?

Before you start your freshman year 14%

Freshman year - 1st semester 4%

Freshman year - 2nd semester 15%

Sophomore year - 1st semester 35%

Sophomore year - 2nd semester 16%

Junior year - 1st semester 10%

Junior year - 2nd semester 0%

Senior year - 1st semester 0%

Senior year - 2nd semester 0%

After graduation 0%

Observations

More than half of the freshmen sampled felt their declaration of major curriculum should come during the sophomore year. As observed with the preceding question, there was a similar trend here for earlier year selection from Elementary Education and Library Science majors, and junior year declaration preferred by many Liberal Arts students. In view of these strong counterpressures, the extent of the sophomore year sentiment seems rather remarkable.

Question #7

In addition to the usual college advisement program provided for students after they declare their major area of specialization, do you think you would desire special academic advisement to help you make the initial choice of what major you would enter?

Yes, definitely 40%

Probably 37%

Not likely 11%

No, definitely 2%

Not sure right now 7%

Observations

A prominent finding in this entire freshmen study is their overwhelming expression of probable need for special academic advisement for major selection. This desire for advisement cut across curriculum majors. This general ground swell of opinion was lead by freshmen in Arts and Sciences who were most definite in their advisement request. It seems worth emphasizing that almost 80 percent

of this freshmen sample would likely welcome aid in making perhaps the most important decision of their undergraduate life.

Part I - Summary of Findings

1. Almost half of the freshmen have a particular job in mind that motivates their college studies.
2. Over half of the class, especially Elementary Education majors, are looking forward to full time employment immediately upon graduation.
3. Over 80% of these freshmen want a freshmen or early sophomore year experience with specific courses in their major field of interest.
4. Less than one-fourth of the class is absolutely certain about the type of job they would like to start upon graduation.
5. Over three-fourths of the freshmen feel the decision on their future occupation could reasonably be made by the end of their sophomore year.
6. By far the largest percentage of students, over one-third the class, feel the most realistic time to choose their major field of study was the first semester of their sophomore year.
7. Over three-fourths of the freshmen class wanted special advisement to help choose their major, in addition to the usual student advisement program for declared majors.

Part II - Supplementary Analysis

The computer program provided additional analyses of possible relationships between varied background characteristics and the principle questions of this study. The following is a brief summary of the factors that produced significant findings.

1. Income Level - (Head of Household)

No consistent pattern of relationship was observed between income levels and the motivational items reviewed in the body of this report. It is interesting to point out that the median head of household income was estimated at $11,100. which compares with $9,600. computed for the freshmen class in 1970. Inflation by itself could not account for the rise of median income of $1500. during those two years. A possible answer is suggested in the next section.

2. Father's Occupation

Freshmen whose fathers were in professional or semi-professional occupations or proprietors, managers, or officials were less likely to seek full time employment upon graduation. These students exceeded class norms in their desire for post graduate travel and new experiences or graduate work. On the other hand, freshmen with fathers in clerical, office work or sales had more definite post graduate plans and a particular job to enter. A factor related to this analysis is the trend in distribution of father's occupation during the last two years. When combined with data taken from the Centennial Class Survey an interesting shift is noted.

Table - 3

Trends in Freshmen Father's Occupation

Father's Occupation	1949*	1959*	1970*	1972
Professional or Semi-Professional	16.4	14.4	17	19
Proprietor, Manager, Official	7.3	16.3	18	20
Farmer, or Farm Manager	5.0	9.8	3	3
Clerical, Office, Sales, Kindred	26.0	9.6	13	10
Craftsman, Skilled	25.8	24.2	26	22
Foreman, Machine, Semi-Skilled	12.8	17.7	12	10
Unskilled Laborer	4.1	5.3	1	2
Other	1.8	2.2	3	6

*Comprehensive Freshmen Survey - Section II, p. 5

The 1972 figures show a definite swing towards father's occupations in the two highest socio-economic classifications. For the first time in 23 years there has been a simultaneous decrease in freshmen with fathers in clerical, craftsman, and foremen classifications. For whatever the reason, these latter three categories are not sending their children to Shippensburg to the extent they once did. The impact of this change is already being felt.

The greater proportion of freshmen with fathers in managerial or professional vocations is an important factor in the abrupt rise of estimated median income previously mentioned. This demographic change also affects an area of serious social concern. Of all factors correlated with drug use experience, father's occupation was the best discriminator. Extremely conservative drug use characterizes freshmen with fathers in the craftsman, clerical, and foreman occupations. In contrast, significantly greater use of drugs is associated with freshmen with fathers in the two highest paying occupations. It is precisely from these homes of professional or semi-professional fathers that we draw proportionately more students. Barring

widespread changes in student norms, the drug use incidence on campus should increase. Additional evidence for such a conclusion is found in the next section.

3. Drug Use Incidence

A. Two Year Trend

Drug use patterns provided interesting interfactor relationships throughout this study. Of initial concern was whether there had been any noticeable change since the freshmen survey taken two years ago. The following chart compares the average rate of non-users of drugs and alcohol between the two freshmen classes.

Table - 4

Percent of Non-Users

	1970	1972
Marijuana	86	67
Amphetamines	95	85
L.S.D.	97	89
Heroin	100	100
Alcohol	35	21

The general rise in drug use is quite apparent in the current freshmen class. Perhaps even more significant is the analysis of drug use by curriculum major that was conducted for the first time in the present survey.

B. Drug Use and Major Field of Study

Table - 5

Percent of Drug Use by Curriculum

Curriculum	Marijuana	Amphetamines	L.S.D.	Heroin	Alcohol* (Non-Use)
(Class Average)	32	14	8	0	21
Business Education	38	18	18	0	8
Elementary Education	17	7	4	0	32
Library Science	26	11	7	0	29
Secondary Education	29	14	9	0	25
Arts and Sciences	35	16	9	2	16
Business Administration	43	19	10	3	14

* Percent agreeing to statement "I do not drink."

In the above chart, consistently greater drug usage was associated with freshmen majors in Business Administration, Arts and Sciences, and Business Education. It should be remembered that the data on current drug use may be somewhat conservative due to the underrepresentation of male freshmen in Business Administration and Arts and Sciences in the sample population. The standards for declaring drug usage on any campus a "serious" problem has always been a moot question. However the current situation may be classified, the outlook for the future does not look encouraging. Enrollment trends at Shippensburg show the greatest current and future expansion is in the schools of Arts and Sciences and Business Administration. Similar to the analysis of father's occupation, the indication once again is that increases in student numbers are occurring in areas associated with highest student drug use.

C. Drug Use and Goal Clarity

The relationship between drug use and goal clarity was one of the most complex points examined in this study. The multiple responses to

each of the seven new questions developed for this investigation were individually associated with all possible responses to the drug use questions. The evidence strongly supports the conclusion that there exists an inverse relationship between drug usage and clarity of future occupation and personal motivation.

The direction of this association is not surprising. What is unusual is the overwhelming amount of data that support this point. The general pattern is consistent for both drug and alcohol use. Non-users were often twice as certain and clear about their job future than users. The relationship between clarity of future occupation and marijuana typifies this trend.

Table - 6

Clarity of Future Job and Marijuana Usage

		Marijuana Use Rate		
Job Clarity	Class Average	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Absolutely Certain	23	13	10	19
Fairly Certain	47	45	40	19
Not Quite Sure	18	24	34	25
Totally Undecided	10=28	16=40	14=48	34=59

The last two categories in job clarity have been totalled for some gross indicator of future occupational uncertainty. It should be noted how this figure increases linearly with increased rates of marijuana usage. This pattern holds consistently for other drugs and alcohol where the number of users is sufficient for examination.

Statistical relationships can not prove causation between variables. It is interesting to speculate, however, what the effect of a comprehensive program in occupational counseling and special academic advisement might have upon these freshmen. It is just possible that if clarification of future goals occurs, it might be accompanied by a decreasing rate of

drug use. This point will be raised again in the final section dealing with possible implications of this study.

4. Sex

Not many sex differences were found in response to the motivational questions of this study. There was a slight trend for males to be more uncertain about their job future. Females showed more of a definite tendency to have one particular job in mind that guided their college preparation.

5. Grade Point Average

There were noticeable differences between freshmen with an "A" average and those with a "C" average during high school. In brief the "A" students were more certain about their future job, could declare their major earlier, and were interested in taking specific courses in their major field much sooner than "C" students.

6. Geographical Area

In comparison with the class average, freshmen from large urban areas were: three times as likely to go on to graduate school; twice as likely to be confused about life in general; and less likely to have a particular job motivating their college studies.

Possible Implications of Study

It is impossible to anticipate what impact, if any, the finding of this study would have upon the various faculty and administrative components of the College.

The following suggestions may vary in specificity and practicality, but they are offered in the hope of providing a catalyst for positive action.

1. A freshmen survey should be conducted every two years during freshmen orientation week. This procedure is mandated by the dynamic shifts in freshmen class composition that have occurred in the past two years. The survey could function as a barometer of change to help guide the College through its current reorganization and adjustment process.

2. Must all students in the same class be required to declare their major course of study at the same time? Is it possible to work out a system in which a student has the personal option of declaring a major any time before or during his first two years of college. From this study, it appears that Elementary Education majors would favor declaration before or at the start of the freshmen year. Arts and Science and Business Administration would probably prefer waiting to the sophomore year. A policy of optional major declaration could meet the problem caused by these conflicting preferences.

3. A concerted effort to increase career counseling for incoming freshmen and sophomore students should be undertaken. A possible plan of action might include:

   A. Small group (15-20 students) summer workshops in career orientation for all freshmen and interested upperclassmen. The staff would review current job market trends, training requirements, and available Shippensburg programs.

   B. A campus career information center should be set up, manned by qualified specialists, to provide students with a comprehensive view of the existing job market. The following activities could be the responsibility of the center's staff:

      1. Provide occupational counseling and an accessable source of answers for students with career oriented questions.

      2. Take career information <u>to</u> the students through regularly scheduled

dorm meetings (on a floor-by-floor basis) which would consist of career briefings and a question and answer period.

3. Distribute to administrators and faculty updated job market surveys relevant to their fields and students' interests. Semester bulletins would be issued for all discipline-related vocations so that the general level of career knowledge among faculty and staff would be increased.
4. Assume chief responsibility for coordinating on-campus job placement interviews.
5. Develop grant proposals to seek outside funding of the center's operation from governmental and business sources.
6. Conduct summer workshop program and train faculty for participation.

C. There is a very unique aspect to the expansion of the career counseling program at Shippensburg. Although job information provision is in itself valuable, this study suggests an ultimate impact may just be in the reduction of future drug use on campus. The emphasis on occupational counseling rather than poorly received drug education programs is rather novel in approach. State and federal agencies might be interested in funding such a program as a prototype for action against campus drug use.